

## EGREMONT GREEN COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES May 13, 2020

*The meeting opened at 11:04 a.m. via Zoom.*

*Present were Juliette Haas, Marj Wexler (Chair), Pat Konecky, Corinna Barnard, Emily Eyre, Richard Allen. Eileen Vining also attended for a portion of the meeting, via Chat.*

Minutes of the meeting on Feb. 18 were accepted.

### **Sustainability Coordinator's report:**

—**DEP's small materials recycle grant:** Juliette applied for this funding as she has for several years. The grant is open to communities in the state who submit an annual survey about their recycling efforts. Under a scoring system, towns are rewarded for reducing waste. Egremont, for instance, earns points for running a swap shop and running collections of materials that are difficult to dispose. Egremont has scored 11 points, with small towns earning \$350 per point. Consideration will be given to applying this year's grant to the purchase of a new compactor at the Transfer Station.

—**Annual "waste line" figures** will be coming with the end of the Town's fiscal year on June 30. Juliette said that this spring the Town has been taking a lot more trash due to the Covid-related population influx, with volume in May comparable to that of August.

**Egremont Green Committee activities now and in the near future:** This discussion hinged on forthcoming information about the reopening of certain aspects of the economy that could affect recycling practices, such as redemption centers for empty bottles and cans. IGA Hillsdale, which is in New York State and has a machine on the outside of its store, is accepting bottles and cans but nearby redemption centers in Great Barrington are closed. Consideration was given to urging residents to save up their recyclable materials and donations and not simply throw them out, particularly since the Town will start paying a tonnage fee for its waste and recycling material starting July 1.

**Net metering:** Pat briefed the group about the problem of capping the amount of money that a home owner can make by selling excess energy to the grid. The issue came up in the context of a petition to have the federal government, through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, control regulations related to solar energy on a national level rather than on the state by state basis as it is now. Pat noted that the FERC has historically favored the fossil fuel industry.

**Tool library:** This is a community project but is being watched by the committee. It is on hold due to Covid-19. Emily noted that the website is set up, but had no listings yet. Pat said that it was fine to share on a small scale and to make the necessary arrangements.

**Welcome buckets:** The delivery of composting pails packed with items to help residents reduce waste is on pause due to Covid-19.

**National Grid home energy audits:** Also on pause.

**Movie "Reuse Because You Can't Recycle the Planet:"** Juliette noted that the Town has a projector and raised the idea of a French Park movie night in August with social distancing. Members expressed enthusiasm about the idea, but doubted that "green" screenings would be a big draw.

**Mass DEP "Reduce, Reuse, Repair Micro-Grant"**— Emily noted that since Egremont already receives recycling dividends the Town is not eligible. However, she read aloud the following elements of the program and highlighted NO. 3 – an online directory of local reuse options as a possible committee project – as something for the committee to pursue. Pat suggested creating a category for reusing and repairing. The Springfield MRF's "what do I do with" tab on its website could be helpful. Juliette raised the possibility of creating or catering a directory specific to South Berkshire County, but first checking to see if Great Barrington has already done that.

- 1) Partner with a vocational school to establish a training program to teach repair skills for electronics and/or furniture
- 2) Pilot a reusable to-go container service that partners with local take-out restaurants to offer green options for take-out or leftovers
- 3) Develop an online directory of reuse options that connects residents to local resources for thrifting, repairing, renting, sharing, donating, etc
- 4) Implement a reusable pallets and containers program
- 5) Coordinate a procurement process for utilizing refurbished and remanufactured furniture during a new school construction project
- 6) Develop a local deconstruction policy that mandates historic homes must be manually deconstructed and salvaged
- 7) Launch a deconstruction and building materials reuse program
- 8) Add or expand a bulk section at grocery or retail store, working with local health department to
- 9) institutionalize a system to collect, sanitize, and supply reusable fillable containers for customer use

**Transfer Station Videos:** These would be customized for the Town. ("Hi, I'm Bill your Transfer Station supervisor, and here's what you need to know about putting items in our recycling container.") Pat put out feelers to students at Simon's Rock and high schools to see if anyone wanted to produce the videos and did not get any response. The question of improving upon the existing signs arose. Emily said NYC has great signs and its materials are available. Juliette said that the signs should not be done piecemeal, but would require a complete overhaul. Current signs were put up about six years ago and were paid by a grant.

**Edge articles:** Corinna suggested that the next column provide tips for fighting excess trash during Covid-19, such as hanging on to containers until redemption centers

reopen, sharing tools carefully, bags supermarket purchases in the parking lot and into reusable bags in your car. Otherwise the standing queue remains:

- 1) Virtual tool library – about a community effort and sharing in general. (Spring)
- 2) MRF town materials and the shifts underway locally in the recycling industry.
- 3) BRTA bus routes to South County.
- 4) Rollout for rebates for EVs are back from state.
- 5) Findings of the National Grid's Green Communities program, begun in 2012. Data from these various certified communities shows the strides possible in reducing electricity consumption (renewables, conservation & efficiency). Biggest challenge is transportation (which could provide a tie-in with No. 3 & No. 4).

**Roadside clean-up report:** Marj said that even though the committee was not involved this year due to Covid-19, many residents participated on their own. Richard raised the idea of an “adopt a highway” initiative under which residents would take care of a stretch of roadway year-round. Juliette noted that such an effort would have to be registered with the state Department of Transportation in Lenox and involves a formal commitment. The group was receptive to the idea and envisioned a section in the Town newsletter that would provide recognition for participants.

**Reuse Roundtable:** Emily was going to see if materials were available from the May 12 Department of Environmental Protection webinar “The Future & Safety of Reuse in Massachusetts.”

The meeting was adjourned at 12:15

Submitted by Corinna Barnard